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Providing parents of preschool and/or kindergarten age children with suggestions for developing homebound readiness activities for reading instruction

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PROVIDING PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL AND/OR KINDERGARTEN AGE CHILDREN WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING HOMEBOUND READINESS ACTIVITIES FOR READING INSTRUCTION

by

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CHAPTER I

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Recent programs in education have been generated in the area of early childhood education. One does not have to read too far in the current literature without coming in contact with some designs of programs to meet the needs of preschool children. Educators and parents alike have recognized the tremendous impact of early childhood education programs. Mildred Beatty Smith reflects this concern as she examines the concept of preschool education.

> In the preschool years a child has a unique potential for learning; nothing that will be done later can possibly compensate for the injudicious waste of these years.[1]

Lest we as educators do waste these years, programs that attempt to bring the home and school together in a productive partnership must be devised. Home-school programs in such areas as reading have, however, reached only a small percentage of the homes. Programs have relied on

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[1]Mildred Beatty Smith, Home and School Focus on Reading (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1971), p. 102.

parent initiative and have been largely school-based. There seems to be a need to reverse this arrangement and place the initiative with the school personnel and possibly even develop homebound programs. Such homebound programs would seemingly be more directly stimulating and develop a productive partnership between the home and school.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research paper is to review the basic theories of child development, reading readiness, and the question of reading for preschoolers as they can, in turn, be translated to parents through home-school programs with an emphasis on parental involvement. From these programs and other literature available, a survey of suggestions that can be interpreted and relayed to parents, as well as activities that are capable of being implemented in most homes will be presented.

Significance of the Study

This research paper was written in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the need for reading in-service programs for the majority of the parents of preschool and/or kindergarten age children. The review of the current literature is meant to be used by the elementary school personnel as they study the feasability and impact of the program. Finally, it is anticipated that

the conclusions and implications of the survey will provide suggestions which can be used in implementing parent programs in the community.

Scope and Limitations

This survey was initiated to review the current parent in-service programs and their theoretical basis so as to develop an understanding of the school's need to become more involved in home-based parent in-service programs. The scope of the survey was confined to that literature presenting a study of the theoretical need for early childhood education programs that rely on parental involvement, pre-reading programs that have sought parental cooperation, and activities and suggestions usable by most parents.

Summary

The development of this chapter began with an introduction pointing to the need for homebound reading readiness programs. As stated, the problem being explored will focus in on readily implemented suggestions and activities that can help the school personnel reach into a majority of the homes that could benefit from such reading in-service programs.

The following chapters will review the literature pertaining to reading readiness instruction in early childhood education programs where the home-school relationship has been recognized and developed. Finally, a review of some

exemplary preschool reading program designs will be presented along with possible suggestions and activities for parents.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

As this writer reviewed the literature, certain topics seemed to emerge as predominant and pervasive. These key topics have been sorted and will hopefully be presented in a natural progression ranging from the basic theoretical precepts of reading readiness in early childhood education programs to the actual implementation of programs.

Reading Readiness Instruction in Early Childhood Education Programs

Developmental Theories

The need to examine reading readiness instruction in early childhood education was a matter of placing the issues in perspective. That such programs do indeed exist is in abundant evidence. What is more essential is to recognize the working processes of the programs. These programs do follow certain developmental theories that should be understood before the role of reading readiness can be explored.

Spodek reports on the child development theory as he considers the sources of the early childhood curriculum.

> One of these, Gesellian theory, considers child development as primarily maturational. As a result of this theory, children have been grouped by age in nursery-kindergarten classes and provided with experiences considered appropriate for their age level. Arguments derived from Gesellian theory have also been used to exclude inappropriate activities from the school life of children. . . .
>
> More recently the recourse to child development theory has used the work of Piaget as a source of curriculum. A number of projects aimed at enhancing intellectual development as the basis for creating specific curriculums for disadvantaged children. In one program using a Piagetian scheme of analysis, for example, activities are designed to move children through levels of representation from the index level to the symbol level to the sign level.[1]

From the child development theories, one might find also that the early childhood education programs have varied in their curricular approaches. Spricker notes that such approaches have been created to meet the learning problems of youngsters.

> These efforts resulted in the formulation of at least three major types of curriculum models: (1) those placing emphasis on intellectual or cognitive development . . . ; (2) the perceptual motor development model . . . ; and (3) the academic skills development model . . . .[2]

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[1]Bernard Spodek, "Sources of Early-Childhood Curriculum," The Education Digest, XXXVI (January, 1971), 50.

[2]Howard H. Spicker, "Intellectual Development in Early Childhood Education," The Education Digest, XXXVII (October, 1971), 35.

Whether the theory be matching maturational growth or enhancing intellectual development, or the approach be cognitive, perceptual motor development model, or a directed instructional model, they all appear to be operational and influence the development of programs to meet the prereading needs of the preschooler.

Aspects of Reading Readiness

As previously explained, early childhood education programs are developmental in nature and are concerned with those areas of readiness felt needed in preparation for formal first grade classroom instruction. This section will cover one aspect of that readiness preparation, the readiness for reading.

The literature on this topic indicated that there are a variety of definitions of reading readiness. As Beller states, "Few concepts in education have been surrounded with more controversy than the concept of readiness."[1]

Carline substantiates Beller's comments as he explains:

> Readiness means many things to many people. Narrowly conceived, readiness means that children are ready to be seated at desks with books, pencils, and paper and to practice the same kinds of exercises and skills that other children are doing. Broadly conceived, readiness means

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[1]E. Kuno Beller, "The Concept Readiness and Several Applications," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 727.

that children are provided with rich living experiences for language development and realistic problem solving.[1]

Whether an educator conceives readiness in a narrow or broad sense, it is apparent that it is not a simple process according to Harris:

> Readiness for reading is a complex concept, involving many different contributing factors and developing through the intimate interplay of learning with biological growth.[2]

Thus the exchange of views on readiness comes back to the questions raised previously by the early childhood education theorists. Reading commentators proved to also be somewhat divided on the issues of biological development versus intellectual development. Examining first the notion that the natural development of a child should be a measure of readiness, Hymes provides an explanation of why readiness does not have to be "built" into the child.

> Before the child crawls or stands or walks, there are no 'readiness programs'. No one ever has to train specifically, or make up drills, or devise special advance practices. The power to crawl, stand, walk unfolds as the child's body matures. . . .
> Through the selfsame process the basic power develops on which reading can be built, in its own right time. Reading is no different.[3]

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[1]Donald E. Carline, "Preparing Your Child for Reading," Helping Your Child Grow in Reading (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association), p. 14.

[2]Albert J. Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability (5th ed.; New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1970), p. 20.

[3]James L. Hymes, Jr., Before the Child Reads (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1958), pp. 17-18.

Bond and Wagner considered beginning readiness training as a more moderate blend of factors.

> How early in a child's life does reading growth begin? Soon after he is born! As a child lives and learns in the years before going to school he develops a physique, a personality, habits, needs, interests, vocabulary, and backgrounds upon which his reading growth depends.[1]

In another publication by the same authors, they present an additional interpretation:

> In general, readiness has three interrelated components: motivational, maturational, ecucational.
> 1. Set. The pupil must accept the goal of learning and the intermediate goals necessary to reach the ultimate goal. . . .
> 2. Maturity. The pupil must have matured sufficiently to involve himself in the act of learning. . . .
> 3. Learnings. The child must have the prerequisite learning to achieve the new reading accomplishments expected of him.[2]

Harris also echoes the interrelationship of factors as he gives this definition:

> Reading readiness may be defined as a state of general maturity which, when reached, allows a child to learn to read without excess difficulty. It is a composite of many interconnected traits. A child may be more advanced in some aspects of reading readiness than in others.[3]

Readiness for reading as related by the previous authors does seem to be a complex process which should be

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[1]Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Child Growth in Reading (Chicago: Lyons and Carnahan, 1955), p. 17.

[2]Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read (4th ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 17.

[3]Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 21.

approached with more than speculative planning and guidance. Tinker and McCullough explain:

> Success in learning to read depends largely upon the stage of all-around development the child has achieved. Involved in this growth is a complex of abilities, habits, and information. Some of its ingredients, such as intelligence, come with inner maturation. But many others are learned and are susceptible to guidance. To a large degree, therefore, reading readiness can and should be taught.[1]

The question remains then whether educators should adopt more of a "laissez-faire" attitude or consciously structure a readiness program for the child. In a more objective search for a solution, researchers have consequently attempted to identify the readiness factors. One informative study was reported by Weintraub.

> Hoffman developed an inventory of factors identified as important to readiness for reading and to achievement in reading and reported his findings based on 120 predominantly rural children and 42 children from an industrial, urban area. Reading achievement of subjects was assessed near the end of grade three on both the California Achievement Test and the Stanford Achievement Test. Achievement in terms of ranking within the group was then related to four distinct areas of prekindergarten factors: physical characteristics, inter-personal relationships, emotional stability, and general experiences.[2]

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[1]Miles A. Tinker and Constance M. Mc Cullough, Teaching Elementary Reading (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 89.

[2]Samuel Weintraub, et al., "Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading, July 1, 1971, to June 30, 1972," Reading Research Quarterly, VIII (Spring, 1973), 358.

As exemplified, any definitive results of readiness studies reveals that there are questions open to interpretation. In closing the review of this sub-topic, a three-point summation of reading readiness provided by Durkin is worth noting.

1. Readiness for reading should not be viewed as comprising a single collection of abilities which will be the same for all children. Actually, what makes one child ready might be quite different from what makes another ready.
2. Whether or not a child is ready depends upon his particular abilities, but also upon the reading instruction that will be offered. This type of dependence means that readiness can be assessed only when a child is given varied opportunities to learn to read.
3. What a child is able to learn as a result of these opportunities offers very specific information about his readiness. With some children, a particular opportunity will result in reading ability and so, quite obviously, these children were ready. With others, however, the same opportunity will not 'take', and so for them it is a type of readiness instruction. That the same teaching procedure can be reading instruction for some children and readiness instruction for others suggests serious flaws in school practices which seem to go out of their way to create an artificial separation between a readiness program and a reading program. A much more defensible way of working is to view readiness instruction as reading instruction in its early stages.[1]

A Question of Reading for Preschoolers

The issue of teaching reading to preschoolers, as evidenced in the literature, is related to readiness

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[1]Dolores Durkin, "Reading Readiness," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (March, 1970), 534.

considerations. Upon examination one finds that it is certainly not a new issue. Smith relates the following historical reference:

> In the early decades of American reading instruction, children were sent to school at two or three years of age. At this time they were immediately taught the alphabet and inducted into the intricacies of the reading process.[1]

Even as this notion of early reading instruction has had a long existence, the issues still seem unsettled as there are those who stress formal structured lessons for preschoolers while others following more of a Gesellian theory would rather approach the issue informally with little or no structured teaching. Since this paper is focusing in on the role of the parent at home, the position of the parent rather than the school setting will be examined in light of this question.

Before presenting the information concerning the question, it is necessary to define what is meant by formal reading instruction. Blanton's definition is that:

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[1]Nila Banton Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 446.

"Formal reading instruction is highly controlled and makes great use of repetition and patterned responses."[1] The step-by-step instruction of letter-sound correspondences which would lead to further complexities of the reading process is the type of activity herein referred to as formal reading instruction.

Setting the tone of those who would favor a more relaxed approach, Carline provides two points of caution. The first aims at what he believes is a misconception, and the second advises parents to proceed with caution.

> Pressuring a preschool child into reading activities in the belief that this will make him a better reader in school. Research does not support this view.
>
> Genuine parental concern for a child's success in life is very necessary. Over-concern which results in placing the child in school or beginning at too early an age must be avoided. There is almost no danger in being relaxed about reading. The danger's on the side of beginning prematurely.
>
> When parents are eager to have a preschool child read, they run the risk of curbing his enthusiasm for reading and making him tense. There are pleasant, exciting, stimulating things for a child to do before he reads. The child who has a good, enriched, full life before he reads, will take reading in stride when the time comes.[2]

Rogers presents what seems to be almost a hands-off statement for parents as she too cautions against premature formal instruction.

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[1]William E. Blanton, A Teacher's Guide to Preschool Reading Instruction, PREP Report No. 40 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 4.

[2]Carline, "Preparing Your Child for Reading," Helping Your Child Grow in Reading, pp. 15, 17-18.

> It is now an established fact that one of the principal causes of poor progress in reading is premature formal instruction. The professionally prepared teacher has the responsibility of ascertaining when the optimum teaching time arrives for each child. This may very well be the most important decision that will ever be made concerning a child's educational progress, and it should be made as a result of a careful study of the child's readiness, not as a result of parental pressure.[1]

Just as some authors seem convinced that premature formal instruction is possibly harmful, Blanton takes the opposite view.

> In summary, the fear surrounding the possible ill effects of preschool reading instruction appears to be unfounded. In more cases than not, the side effects of preschool instruction appear to be more beneficial than harmful. From the point of view of emotional and attitudinal development, perhaps the most beneficial side effect is that children tend to develop pride and confidence in their ability to learn to read. Consequently, formal reading instruction might be an alternative for better adjustment to academic work in later years.[2]

The Home-School Relationship

The lack of consensus on formal reading instruction for preschoolers is indicative that parents need to know what is best for their children. In this section the environmental factors will be examined in relation to reading success. Because these factors are most closely

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[1]Norma Rogers, "What is Reading Readiness?" Encouraging Children to Read, How Parents Can Help, ed. James L. Laffey, ERIC/CRIER + IRA Micromonograph (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1973), p. 2.

[2]Blanton, A Teacher's Guide to Preschool Reading Instruction.

controlled in the home, the influence of the home will be reviewed. Integrated finally with the home environment, the direct involvement of school personnel with parents will be the concluding aspect of the home-school relationship.

Investigating Environmental Reading Problems

In an attempt to identify the difficult task of dealing with environmental reading problems, Smith states,

> There seem to be three principal difficulties that a child destined to fail brings with him to school. They are the result of his environment and they are by no means confined to the poor. Most obvious is an inadequate langauge. . . .
>
> The second difficulty is lack of learning experience. . . . The third problem is lack of motivation. . . .[1]

The home is apparently recognized as the initial environment for a child according to Tinker and McCullough. They discuss various basic factors of a reading program.

> The home environmental effects upon reading readiness, during the preschool years and after, may be such that they foster the development of excellent reading readiness, only partial readiness, or hardly any at all, depending upon the nature of the home and what goes on in it.[2]

The lack of an adequate home environment has prompted a variety of programs to be funded in order to provide some

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[1]Carl B. Smith, "Dealing with Environmental Reading Problems," The National Elementary Principal, L (January, 1971), 34.

[2]Tinker and McCullough, Teaching Elementary Reading, p. 90.

type of home intervention program like Head Start. Spricker discusses the successes found in an intervention program for disadvantaged children.

> Another aspect studied has been the specific contribution of a home intervention program to the intellectual development of disadvantaged preschoolers. . . It seems safe to conclude that communities that can only provide short-term preschool programs to disadvantaged children should supplement them with a home intervention.[1]

The Home Influence

The concept of environmental factors as related by the previous authorities appears to establish the influence of the home on the child's learning. Reflecting the views of a number of authors, Todd clearly respects the home influence.

> In the United States today, parents exercise an almost unchallenged influence on their children for the first five years of their lives. The family has the greatest opportunity to assure the continuance of the human qualities of honesty, freedom, love, and courage. In fact, it is questionable whether the school can teach such values and virtues if the home has not already established favorable attitudes.[2]

The home influence has also been a research factor in the assessment of home prereading experiences and achievement in the first grade reading program. Miller found the following conclusion:

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[1]Spicker, "Intellectual Development in Early Childhood Education," The Education Digest, p. 36.

[2]Charles C. Todd, Jr., "Should Reading Be Taught At Home," The Reading Teacher, XXVI (May, 1973), 814.

> Home prereading experiences were found to be related to children's reading readiness attainment but not to first-grade reading achievement, possibly because of the influences of teacher personality and skill.[1]

That parents must be aware of their influence and ready to react is a topic covered by Mackintosh and Guilfoile.

> Whether a child learns to read easily and happily depends upon the home as well as upon the teacher and the school. His feelings about reading reflect his parents' attitudes both toward him and toward reading. If, at home, he is secure in his love of his parents, feels himself a person in his own right through sharing in family experiences, and has learned to give and take in play with children of his own age, he is likely to be emotionally and socially ready, when the time comes, for school and for learning to read.[2]

Ward accounts for the influence parents have on their children as their first reading teacher.

> The years before a child reads are replete with the impact of environmental experiences which present him to the reading teacher with certain skills, concepts, feelings, and knowledge which form the pre-reading base from which she will need to build. Whether by accident or careful design, children arrive with accumulations of experience which they have elected to retain. The role of 'parenting' is so vital to the arranging of such accumulations that the role being 'the first teacher of reading' is unmistakable.[3]

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[1]Wilma Miller, "Home Prereading Experiences and First-Grade Reading Achievement," The Reading Teacher, XXII (April, 1969), 645.

[2]Helen K. Mackintosh and Elizabeth Guilfoile, How Children Learn to Read, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Bulletin 1964, No. 27 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 1.

[3]Evangeline Ward, "A Child's First Reading Teacher: His Parents," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 756.

In a final statement on the topic, Roberson, in agreement with Ward, comments:

> Who is the child's 'teacher' prior to formal training? The answer is so simple it is overwhelming. The parent or parent substitute is as involved as or even more involved than any professional in the teaching of reading.[1]

A Need for Parental Involvement

Relating the influence of the home to the need for parental involvement, Durkin states,

> It is because of the special influence of the family upon young children that those responsible for their schooling need to be concerned about life at home. Admittedly, schools cannot do a great deal to change it. In addition, there are those who would say that the schools are already trying to do too much. However, even if both observations are accurate, they still are not a denial of the fact that helping parents is one of the best ways to help teachers do a better job in the classroom. With that goal in mind, it is strongly recommended that schools have procedures that make a contribution to parent education.[2]

Brzeinski and Howard establish a theoretical need for parental involvement in the following conclusions:

> If educational research in early childhood education is to have a major impact, it must include the added dimension of the home, thus recognizing a multi-pronged thrust: the home fulfilling a supportive role, the

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[1]Dorothy Reed Roberson, "Parents and Teachers" Partners in the Teaching of Reading," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 722.

[2]Dolores Durkin, Teaching Young Children to Read (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972), p. 435.

> school providing identifications and programs for recognized, modifiable deficiencies, and research evaluating processes and procedures.[1]

The Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood Education, California State Department of Education makes a similar statement in the following excerpt:

> Parent involvement and education are essential elements of early childhood education. In fact, parent involvement is so important that it should be required wherever feasible.[2]

In another section of the California report the emphasis is on parents of the very young.

> Another component of the parent program should be parent education that includes the child when he is very young, perhaps at a developmental age of three or even younger.[3]

Moving from the theoretical basis for involving parents to the concept of a responsibility of both the school and parents, Quick comments:

> Teachers and parents have a major responsibility in working together as a team or as partners in developing the reading proficiency of the child. Educators are continually finding that the years between birth and ages six or seven are not only the formative years, but years when the most intensive learning can take place within

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[1]Joseph E. Brzeinski and Will Howard, "Early Reading-How, Not When!" The Reading Teacher, XXV (December, 1971), 240.

[2]Task Force on Early Childhood Education, California State Department of Education (1972), "Parent-Community Involvement in Early Childhood Education," The Education Digest, XXXVIII (December, 1972), 46.

[3]Ibid., 46-47.

> the young child. There, stimulating the child's conceptual development and cognitive processes are considered vital to the child during this period of life.[1]

From this relationship it seems that as Gordon explains, a partnership is developed where parents can take an active part in consciously enriching the child's learning activities. Gordon states,

> The field of early childhood education seems to be moving toward this new home-school partnership. We recognize that children learn in all settings throughout the day and that motivation to learn, as well as actual learning success, requires a total living situation in which parents and school work together. Parents shift from being clients, or silent partners, to becoming full partners in the education of their children.[2]

Durkin provides some clarification of the apparent pitfalls if parents ignore the school's supportive services and alone attempt to pressure their preschooler to read. She makes a reference to parents who in being too concerned about the critical importance of early stimulation, turned their homes into schools.

> When parent groups include individuals like this, there is a great need to help them understand the differences between theories and facts and, at the practical level, the difference between a home that is intellectually stimulating and one that goes overboard and becomes, in the process, intellectually suffocating.

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[1]Donald Quick, "Parent-Teacher Involvement Activities for Improving the Reading of Children," Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal, XVI (March, 1973), 30.

[2]Ira J. Gordon, "Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education," The National Elementary Principal, LI (September, 1971), 28.

> That is not to suggest, by the way, that schools ought to return to their former practice of making parents feel guilty if they offered children any assistance with the academics before they started school. The position getting support in this textbook is that parents ought to be taught how they can help preschoolers in ways that are productive but also enjoyable, both for themselves and the children.[1]

Johnson and Kress also provide some conclusions on the mutual commitment needed between parents and schools. They warn school personnel:

> If the school is to feel free to charge the parents if the product of the home is not a 'viable candidate' for success in school, it had better accept responsibility for helping to assure the success of the home environment.[2]

Preschool Reading Program Designs

Community Program Patterns and Techniques

Community oriented programs seem to take on a variety of forms to fit their particular needs. To avoid any unnecessary repetition of program descriptions, only the unique features of several of the more established patterns for programs will be highlighted.

Patterned after the aspirations of many parent programs, PROJECT PATROL is a project designed to provide incentives for parents to become active participants in the group sessions. The project's philosophy is as follows:

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[1]Durkin, Teaching Young Children to Read, p. 438.

[2]Marjorie S. Johnson and Roy A. Kress, "Mutual Commitment by Parents and Schools," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 706.

> Parents and the home they provide are the most important items in the life of the pre-school child. They set the initial tone of life and can give attitudes, stimulation and values. The PATROL concept aids parents in the understanding of normal child development providing a base of information which can be used by families to enhance the life of their children and build a foundation for the school years.[1]

One of the more commonly copied parent programs is the parent workshop. Criscuolo makes the following reference:

> A successful reading program must solicit involvement and support from parents. Annual reading workshops for parents meet with enthusiastic response. These workshops are of a make-it-and-take-it design where parents become involved by making specific reading games and devices for use with their children at home. An eight-page Handbook for Parents offers some general and specific suggestions on what can be done at home to foster reading readiness and skills.[2]

For those parents who wish to supplement their own readiness activities with the professional programs available on the public broadcasting network, the use of educational television such as that used in the Denver project is available. Blanton comments on the effects of educational television on preschool reading instruction.

> Preschool reading instruction through educational television has been accepted by the public and by many educators with some enthusiasm (witness Sesame Street). The effectiveness of instruction through this medium has

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[1]Thomas B. Bluett and Staff, Learn and Earn (Gillett, Wisconsin: PROJECT PATROL, 1972), p. 1.

[2]Nicholas P. Criscuolo, "PR and the Reading Program," The Reading Teacher, XXVI (May, 1973), 818.

> been praised and questioned, sometimes with more passion than objectivity. The educational community would be well advised to withhold judgment on the effectiveness of this approach until additional evidence is offered.[1]

As Blanton suggests, there is some question concerning the educational television programs like Sesame Street, especially when those programs are the sole source of readiness instruction for the child. Weintraub reported on some research by Sprigle who investigated the effectiveness of Sesame Street with disadvantaged children. Those children in the experimental group viewed the program while the control group was given other learning activities. The conclusions stated:

> On all subtest scores, as well as on the total scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test, the control group scored significantly higher than the experimental group.[2]

The conclusions, therefore, question the relative merits of the television programs as compared to other learning activities available.

Just as workshops, educational television, or a combination of both is available, some educators see a need to broaden the base of application even more to service many more parents. In a report by Moore, Moon, and Moore, this concept is carried through.

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[1]Blanton, A Teacher's Guide to Pre-School Reading Instruction, p. 5.

[2]Weintraub, "Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading, July 1, 1971, to June 30, 1972," Reading Research Quarterly, p. 359.

> Embark upon a massive parent education program, assisting first those who are in greatest need, but educating all parents, by all media available, concerning the developmental needs of their children. Parents who are neither handicapped nor forced to work should be helped to better understand their privileges and responsibilities as parents, to see that 'freedom' sacrificed now will bring larger benefits later.[1]

The broad-based program pattern suggested by the previous writers is carried to its practical application. Smith describes:

> Special techniques may be needed for communicating with hard-to-reach parents. On one occasion a group of thirty interested mothers assigned themselves blocks in their school district, and each made a personal call on every family in her assigned block, inviting parents to a planned program to 'learn what they could do to help their children achieve better in school.' A single-sheet bulletin on colorful paper showing the time, date, place and objective of the meeting was left at each home, just in case parents might forget.[2]

One Florida program, reported on by Ward, has also attempted to reach out to many parents in that some parents are trained to go into the homes of other parents and provide assistance.

> The Florida design builds in the parent role so that half her time is spent learning to be an effective classroom observer and participant; the other half of her time

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[1]Raymond S. Moore, Robert D. Moon, and Dennis R. Moore, "The California Report: Early Schooling For All?" Phi Delta Kappan, LIII (June, 1972), 621.

[2]Mildred Beatty Smith, "The Parents' Role in Children's Success," in Coordinating Reading Instruction, ed. by Helen M. Robinson (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company, 1971), p. 82.

> is spent as a home visitor carrying learning tasks weekly or bi-weekly into the home. The mother (usually) learns the 'how' and 'why' of tasks and materials which her child uses from the parent educator, while developing her competencies as the 'continuing influencer' of her child's learning. The approach is cyclical: the parent educator and mother feed back into the school setting the results of their 'home' work. Thus sustaining the possibilities built into the process. The Parent Implementation approach is a rare example of the provision for ingenuity, initiative, and drive on the part of parents to make decisions on behalf of their children's educational experiences.[1]

Similar to the Florida plan where parents are involved in the program operations, Scott and Thompson report on the Home Start program in Waterloo, Iowa. They provide suggestions for other communities seeking to start their own Home Start Program. Here are some other tips for local Home Start-ers:

1. Confer with your local social agencies before you start planning.
2. Only paid aides work directly with parents and children.
3. Use volunteers in other ways to keep your program running smoothly.
4. Join with parents in drawing up a list of no-cost materials that can be used within the home: paper sacks, stones, empty coffee cans, magazines, ice cream sticks, old clothes, whatever.
5. Don't overlook special aids available for preschool programs which serve handicapped children.[2]

Other programs reviewed are not as home-based as the previous designs but tend to originate from the school or other community facilities. Harrington reports on such a

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[1]Ward, "A Child's First Reading Teacher: His Parents," The Reading Teacher, 758-59.

[2]Ralph Scott and Helen Thompson, "Head Start with Home Start," Early Years, IV (November, 1973), 37.

program that became an extension of an adult education program in the community. A special guide, Preschool Preparatory Experiences, gives parents information relative to the development of their children.[1]

Engelhardt presents another example where mothers bring their preschoolers to a weekly library program.

> In the central library of the Wyomissing Hills Elementary School a weekly program for one-and-a-half to four-year-old tots and their mothers is being conducted to develop early childhood interest in good books, and to assist the parents in their role. The program pivots on literature for the tot or embracing the tot and has been called Mother Goose Morning.[2]

An audio-visual technique utilizes a film designed to acquaint parents with basic reading skills. Powell reports:

> Other comments were that if they had seen the film, or otherwise been made aware of the readiness skills, when their children were younger, they would have been more alert to the children's levels of development and could have easily helped the children in attaining the readiness skills.[3]

In a final program report, one aspect of the California plan is highlighted by Riles for its parental participation features.

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[1]Alma Harrington, "Parents and the School," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 714.

[2]Elizabeth Engelhardt, "A Pre-reading Program," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (March, 1970), 535.

[3]Francis Powell, "Parents Should Know About Reading Skills," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 739.

> What will it do for families? No longer can we afford the mistakes of the past in telling parents 'hands off', that only educators know what is best for their children. This plan will create a parent-school partnership that will strengthen the family by closer home-school ties, make parent education available, and give parents a real voice in the education of their children to an extent we have never before realized.[1]

Readiness Lists and Suggestions

Moving from the general descriptions of home-school programs, this section will focus on readiness lists and suggestions that can be implemented in the home. Surveying the literature for readiness lists and suggestions revealed a replication of ideas among authors. Generally, though, the authorities reviewed did present the following ten factors: 1. keep the child healthy; 2. develop the child's oral language abilities; 3. help the child to become a good listener; 4. expose the child to a variety of experiences; 5. read aloud to the child; 6. develop the child's speech patterns; 7. develop the child's visual skills; 8. develop the child's motor skills; 9. develop the child's social and emotional maturity; and 10. develop the child's interests in books and the library.

As noted by Pearson and Zentgraf, the first factor, keep the child healthy, is important for learning.

> To be relaxed and able to do his best in learning activities your child needs ten to twelve hours sleep every night. His alertness and ability to concentrate

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[1]Wilson Riles, "When Should Schooling Begin?" Phi Delta Kappan, LIII (June, 1972), 614.

also depend upon his good health and regular meals. There should be a balance between active play and quiet play. To know that you care for him is most important to your small child.[1]

Quick also comments on the health factor:

Be Aware of Good Health Habits. Provide the child with guidelines for rest, nutrition, exercise, and proper medical attention. Children who are not feeling well are not good learners.[2]

Quick also develops the second factor as he urges parents to provide for the child's oral language development.

Provide Positive Verbal Stimulus. Such activities as nursery rhymes, playing word games and reading aloud to the child can provide the positive verbal stimulus needed to enable the child to enjoy the sounds of language while learning new vocabulary.[3]

Tinker comments too on the role of the child's language facility.

The greater your child's ability to comprehend material presented in oral form and the greater his proficiency in the use of oral language, the more ready he will be for success in beginning reading.[4]

Rogers explains the third factor dealing with the child's listening skills.

Good listening skills are essential for good speech, vocabulary development, and general language proficiency

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[1]David Pearson and Faith Zentgraf, Parents Assist in Reading (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Schools), p. 5.

[2]Quick, "Parent-Teacher Involvement Activities for Improving the Reading of Children," Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal, 31.

[3]Ibid..

[4]Miles A. Tinker, Preparing Your Child for Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 59.

> . . . Because speech and hearing are so related, you are urged to have your child's hearing checked if speech is delayed or severely defective.[1]

This would also account for the child's development of auditory discrimination skills. Tinker notes,

> Learning to read depends to a large degree upon good listening habits. The reader must become familiar with many sound patterns as indicated in print and be able to make such fine distinctions as the difference in middle sounds of horse and house or shall and shell.[2]

Examining the fourth factor, Quick considers the child's experiential background in the following statement:

> Make Visitations to Stores, the Park, and the Farm Meaningful. Explain things to your child, enable him to observe and ask questions. Point out differences and similarities of objects, plant and animal life--enable your child to become an alert observer.[3]

Rogers also reflects on this point in terms of intellectual stimulation.

> Research has shown that intellectual stimulation or lack of it during the first years of life greatly influences a child's intelligence and behavior as an adult.[4]

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[1]Norma Rogers, "How Can I Help My Child Get Ready to Read?" Encouraging Children to Read, How Parents Can Help, ed. James L. Laffey, ERIC/CRIER + IRA Micromonograph (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1973), p. 9.

[2]Tinker, Preparing Your Child for Reading, p. 71.

[3]Quick, "Parent-Teacher Involvement Activities for Improving the Reading of Children," Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal, 31.

[4]Rogers, "How Can I Help My Child Get Ready to Read?" Encouraging Children to Read, How Parents Can Help, p. 14.

Smith provides some remarks on the fifth factor, read aloud to the child.

> It is advisable for parents to read to their children at preschool and early primary levels as well. When they read to a child from story books, comic strips of the better type, and children's magazines, he becomes aware that books, magazines, and newspapers hold something of interest and amusement for him.[1]

Examining the sixth factor, Flanigan advises parents to develop good speech patterns in the child.

> Correct pronunciation will also help your child with his reading. Speak clearly when you speak to him, and encourage him to speak with some precision, too, without being overly fussy.[2]

The seventh factor deals with the development of the child's visual skills. Zintz explains,

> It is perfectly clear that good vision is an asset in becoming a good reader. Reading requires the ability to see clearly at close range for extended periods of time.[3]

The eighth point stresses the child's development of motor skills. Quick states,

> Allow Opportunity for Manipulation, Discrimination, and Motor Development. Give the child an opportunity to creep and crawl, to develop motor coordination and his perceptual abilities (in and out of corregated boxes is a favorite). As the child matures, let him work with puzzles, crayons and clay.[4]

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[1]Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children, p. 532.

[2]Michael Flanigan, "Helping the Beginning School Child with Reading," No. 5 Home Role (Washington, D.C.: National Reading Center, 1971).

[3]Miles V. Zintz, The Reading Process (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers, 1970), p. 391.

[4]Quick, "Parent-Teacher Involvement Activities for Improving the Reading of Children," Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal, 30.

Harris comments on the ninth factor concerning the child's emotional and social maturity.

> Three aspects of emotional and social maturity are significant in reading readiness. The first of these is emotional stability. . . .
>
> The ability and desire to help oneself, or self-reliance, is another aspect of social maturity that is significant in school adjustment. . . .
>
> The ability to participate actively and co-operatively in group activities is a third extremely important aspect of social development.[1]

Rogers makes some additional comments on this topic:

> Children who are insecure, unwanted, poorly cared for, and little taught are likely to be emotionally unstable and socially inadequate. They do not possess the self-confidence which comes from self-reliance, and they have little self-esteem.[2]

The tenth and final factor deals with the child's interest in books and the use of the public library facilities for children. Shrobe and Rubin note,

> Take your child to the library. Get him his own library card. That will mean a lot to him. Let him pick out his own books. And ask the librarian to suggest good books for him.[3]

Using Materials and Activities in the Home

This last section of the survey will provide a sampling of some materials and activities that can be adapted for use

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[1]Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability, p. 33.

[2]Rogers, "How Can I Help My Child Get Ready to Read?" Encouraging Children to Read, How Parents Can Help, p. 13.

[3]Elizabeth Shrobe and David Rubin, Read to Succeed (New Haven, Conn.: New Haven Public Schools), p. 3.

at home. In addition to presenting some available materials and activities, the explanations for parents will be included to exemplify the philosophies of the various authors.

Beginning with a pamphlet used by the New Haven Public Schools, Read to Succeed, the authors, Shrobe and and Rubin, present parents with games for reading readiness.

> You can help your child get ready to read even before he starts school. There are word games you can play with him that will give him a good start on reading. We have explained some of them here.
>
> Important: Do not turn these games into work. Learning should be fun. It is no fun for a little child to be put down because he makes a mistake in a game. So relax. Have fun with your child. He can learn much more when he is happy than when he is uptight![1]

Rogers provides parents with information on books and records for preschoolers. She comments on the books,

> By capitalizing on your child's interest in hearing a story, you as a parent can help him meet some of his basic needs. You can make him feel secure and loved just by holding him as you read, and you can help him understand himself and his world by providing books with stories and characters about things important to him.[2]

Rogers provides additional advice in her introduction to the selection of records for youngsters.

> Today there is an abundance of quality records for your child. Mother Goose rhymes, children's poetry, songs,

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[1] Ibid., 6.

[2] Norma Rogers, "What Books and Records Should I Get For My Preschooler?" Encouraging Children to Read, How Parents Can Help, ed. James L. Laffey, ERIC/CRIER + IRA Micromonograph (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1973), p. 2.

> plays, orchestrations, and stories provide a wealth of information on all subjects as well as enhance your child's vocabulary and listening skills, stimulate his imagination, encourage self-expression (clapping, marching, singing, dancing), and offer him opportunities to enter the field of culture and enjoyment.[1]

In Blanton's presentation of suggested activities for teachers to develop reading readiness, there are a number of activities that can be adapted for parents to use at home. Blanton introduces the activities with the following explanations:

> Readiness to read is positively related to the habituation of certain behavior and the development of certain skills and appreciations, among these being language ability, motor ability, visual perception, auditory perception, a desire to read, and good work habits. It is possible to develop these habituations and skills through many activities.[2]

Also available are activity oriented resource books like Kids' Stuff, by Collier, Forte, and Mac Kenzie, where activities and objectives to be read by teachers or parents are presented for a variety of skills.[3] Winnick in her book, Before the 3 R's, provides a similar listing of activities according to skill objectives besides giving the parents an annotated bibliography of other resource books.[4]

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[1] Ibid., 16.

[2] Blanton, A Teacher's Guide, p. 6.

[3] Mary Collier, Imogene Forte, and Joy Mac Kenzie, Kids' Stuff (Chatsworth, California: Acoustifon Corporation, 1969).

[4] Mariann P. Winnick, Before the 3 R's (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1973).

Finally, the commentary by Beck and Hopper in The Great Reading Turn-On provides an example of the many materials that have been published primarily for the parents to use at home. The authors' advice to parents is exemplary of the way these homebound activities are meant to be used.

> Some youngsters progress at a relatively even rate throughout the whole learning-to-read process. Others, especially preschoolers, may reach a plateau or even lose interest for days or weeks at a time. It's best not to insist on trying to teach a young child who isn't interested. Instead, put the material away and try again later. Sometimes youngsters seem to be learning little, then suddenly burst into reading with a joyous sense of discovery.
>
> You needn't spend more than a few minutes a day with the reading games, unless your child shows particular interest and pushes for more time.[1]

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[1]Joan Beck and Marjorie Hopper, The Great Reading Turn-On (Racine, Wisconsin: Western Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), p. 4.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will first present the conclusions this writer had drawn from the survey of the literature. From these conclusions will come a basis for explaining the possible implications of the study as they can be applied to reading program.

Conclusions

Reading Readiness Instruction in Early Childhood Education Programs

The survey of early childhood education developmental curriculum theories and their application to reading readiness instruction indicated a general division of the authorities. As noted in the survey, there are those educators who tend to follow the Gesellian philosophy of allowing the child to develop and mature naturally as opposed to those who seek to structure and guide the child's intellectual development through a planned set of learning steps. This writer found

both positions to have some useful applications to the readiness program of a child and agrees with Harris' view of the interplay of both the structured learning with the child's natural growth patterns.[1]

The reading readiness survey also brought out the complex nature of the concept. Again the interplay of nature and nurture in the development of readiness programs seems to be an important factor to consider. As this writer reviewed the related question of when to begin reading instruction, the division of philosophies became more apparent. The emphasis shifted from the theoretical arguments of the early childhood education programs to the very real question of whether a child should begin formal reading instruction before entering the school environment. Even as views on both sides were presented, there still remained that possibility of pushing the child too fast as Carline's statements explained.[2] The inherent dangers are consequently a real concern of school personnel because they will ultimately have the responsibility of working with a possibly confused and frustrated child who was pushed too far, too fast by an overanxious parent. This writer then must conclude that a

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[1]Harris, How to Increase Reading Ability.

[2]Carline, "Preparing Your Child for Reading," Helping Your Child Grow in Reading.

"hands off" policy is not a desirable course of action, but the school personnel should at least feel a responsibility to help parents "proceed with caution" with any homebound reading readiness activities.

Even as this was a possible problem to resolve in the readiness programs, the literature presented did seem to have some areas of agreement. The disagreement thus appears to lie more in the method of enhancing a child's readiness for reading than in the need itself. The reading researchers and practitioners both apparently agree that a need does indeed exist and that enhancing the child's readiness for reading is a legitimate path to follow.

The Home-School Relationship

Unlike the previous section, the survey on the home-school relationship appeared to have a greater consensus of opinions on most topics. The role of the environmental factors certainly has been researched and found to be a significant influence on the child's learning. Thus, the point of a need for home intervention programs was well taken. This would indicate the need to further attempt to affect the home influence by seeking to involve parents in every way feasible. One can hardly argue with the concept of the parent as the child's "first teacher" and the vital role of the parent in meeting the child's prereading needs.

It is no wonder that parents are demanding more recognition in the learning decisions about their children as they sense this responsibility and seek a "full partnership" as Gordon viewed the relationship.[1]

Preschool Reading Program Designs

The survey of a representative sampling of home-school programs can best be concluded with a commentary by Durkin,

> Clearly many of the problems and shortcomings connected with 'life at home' are complex. This points out that not even the best of parent education programs will be able to offer easy or quick solutions. Still, they can at least open up communication between the school and the home and, in the process, help teachers understand better the children who are their responsibility.[2]

The program survey did contain one particular finding that this author found to still be an open question. The research presented on the effects of educational television, while seemingly questioning the benefits, did not deal with the many situations where children do not have an option of viewing a program like Sesame Street or attending an activity group. Lest the findings of the survey are construed as a negative view of televised readiness programs, the implications seem to only point out that where another type of

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[1]Gordon, "Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education," The National Elementary Principal.

[2]Durkin, Teaching Young Children to Read, p. 437.

readiness situation is available, the parent may not wish to rely solely on the television program.

In the following examination of lists and suggestions for parents, all of the ten factors were meant, as the authors suggested, to be the responsibilities of the parents at home, even as the child is enrolled in a kindergarten program. These suggestions should be translated by the school personnel as they pass them on to parents. If such a translation is not made and the parents are not really being in-serviced, there is a distinct possibility that the suggestions could be misunderstood and misused. Wartenberg gives this warning:

> In overriding eagerness to be rid of parents, school people frequently resort to the standard answers: 'Read aloud to your child.' 'Take him on trips to various places of interest.' 'Read traffic signs with him.' These are good suggestions and ones often followed to the best of the parents' understanding of them. They are, nonetheless, sources of frustration for parents. Parents fail to see the relationship of these suggestions to reading and feel very much in the dark about their child's everyday reading program. Parents feel the need to be informed and involved in their children's reading progress.[1]

The well-worn cliche of talking with parents, not to them, seems to apply to this point. If the parents feel that the lists, suggestions, and activities are sincerely designed to help them help their child and not just to keep them out of the school's way, the use of these may likely prove beneficial.

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[1]Herbert Wartenberg, "Parents in the Reading Program," The Reading Teacher, XXIII (May, 1970), 717.

Implications

The implications of this survey appear to substantiate a need for the schools to individualize the parent programs. As surveyed, too many existing programs are reaching only a limited number of the parents and even those who are contacted may, in many instances, be given a stereotyped choice of action to follow with their child.

For example with the question of reading readiness there are possibly parents who disagree with the school's active readiness program and would just as soon leave their children alone to mature on their own without a structured program. Even if this notion is counter to the school's program, there should be personnel available who can assist that parent to at least become aware of the growth stages of a child's development. The parent may then be able to help the child in some way to ensure the fullest possible development of the child's natural abilities.

In the survey of the home-school relationship, it also became apparent that there are perhaps many levels of parental involvement that vary in degree and time. Not all parents have the time available to meet the demands of their children, so they might need the assistance of a volunteer parent or one of the school personnel who could provide the extra help.

The activities too need to be recommended with the needs of the parent as well as the child in mind. Whether the parent has a physical handicap, language barrier, or other such problem that might inhibit their active participation in a program does not mean that they should necessarily be excluded from the services of the school. Where possible, the needs of the parents need to be assessed and then suggestions or activities can be prescribed.

In conclusion, no single program description would seem adequate to react to the information surveyed in this paper. Through the creative application of school personnel and materials, staying within the limits of the staff and material resources, more parents can be reached. If educators are really concerned about meeting the individual needs of the students, then the needs of parents must also be met as parent programs are developed to promote the reading readiness of the child.

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